

Bonus Q: Though it had been around for ages before Steve Yeager made it popular, why did the turkey wattle become popular?

In Ye Olde Days, catchers would use two hands to catch pitches (except if they had to lunge or whatever). The bare hand was on the exterior of the mitt, and would stabilize the mitt.

The problem, particularly if the pitch didn't come dead center into the mitt, is that the bare-handed fingers would get mangled over the course of time. So Yeager began the modern catching style, using just one hand, with the bare hand held out of harm's way.

That did help to prevent the bare fingers from getting mangled. But because the mitt was less stable, more pitches got by the mitt and hit the catcher in the throat. No sane catcher (assuming, for the sake of argument only, that there is such a thing) liked getting hit in the throat. So the turkey wattle became more popular as a way to protect the throat.